



International Journal of Sociology and Political Science

Online ISSN: 2664-7745; Print ISSN: 2664-7737; Impact Factor: RJIF 5.48

Received: 07-05-2020; Accepted: 22-05-2020; Published: 13-06-2020

www.sociologyjournal.in

Volume 2; Issue 1; 2020; Page No. 26-30

Reconstructing the images of party schooling: Evidences from self- experiences

Deepak Khanal

PhD, School of Education, Kathmandu University, Dhulikhel, Nepal

Abstract

Party schooling in the context of Nepal is less focused and less articulated in the academic literature and also in the documents of political parties. In the context of federal democracy in Nepal in general and party-led government in particular, an individual's growth from party cadres to party leader passes through a complex process of schooling. But schooling of the kind is unrevealed, unexposed and unexplored academically in the area of party politics of Nepal. In this background, I argue that how can the process of party schooling be unraveled in the context of Nepal. Relating to my personal life experiences with pragmatic theory of schooling, I discuss that how party schooling passes through three different but interrelated stages, namely in/re-forming, performing and transforming. In this process, I as an individual from among the common people at large began the journey of my political schooling from the stage of 're/forming' to 'performing' and then 'transforming' self from uninformed, unaware, unempowered individual in my childhood to semi-informed, semi-aware and semi-empowered cadre which later help me transform myself into well-informed, fully committed and a well-empowered leader.

Keywords: Party schooling, self- experiences, journey from a cadre to a leader

Introduction

While interacting with others in my socio-political environment, I often come across question of the kind: Which political party do you belong to? There might be several reasons for others to ask me this question. Perhaps my fellow being wants to know my standpoint that I hold in political arena. Perhaps they want to know the way I see the political parties and my relationship with it. Perhaps they want to understand how I perceive myself and others with the lens of that political party. They might also want to know what and how aspects of change I assert in the life of self and others in my social surroundings (Greenwald & Farnham, 2000) ^[6]. The answer to this question may also reflect a particular political belief that I hold to articulate self-other power relationship within the socio-political environment. The answer to this particular question would also reflect how political party can be restructured by differentiating between the images of politics and the images of political party.

On the way to articulating my views on politics and the political party, I often feel the question (what political party do I belong to?) insufficient. My decision to be the part of a political party is not only the product of what aspects but also why and how aspects of my knowing, being and valuing in the field of politics (Christman, 2008) ^[3]. I often wonder why others in my social surrounding do not ask me question of the kind: Why do you belong to that particular political party? How do you come to be the part of that political party?

These two questions are crucial in many ways. First, it reflects why I choose a particular political party may lead me to articulate my philosophical assertion in relation to my political positioning (Kymlicka, 2002) ^[2]. How I happened to be the member of a particular political party, on the other hand,

would provide me with an opportunity to articulate the pedagogic interpretation of being the member of a particular political party (Macpherson, 2010) ^[10]. The two questions (why and how) in order reflect my philosophical and pedagogic meaning of being the member of a political party. Second, it may portray my obligation of being the member of a political party (Kymlicka, 2002) ^[2]. In this context, I use the term 'obligation' to refer to my commitment, my formal promise to assert the ideology of a particular political party. How was I committed to be the member of a political party? What made me redefine and rearticulate myself in terms of a particular political party? These questions are again very crucial in developing the images of politics and political parties and thereby rearticulating the schooling that I came across to develop myself a part of a particular political party. On the way to developing images towards political parties, the above-mentioned questions lead me to the context in which the political party exists. It also leads me to the message that a particular political party imparts. Similarly, it induces me to explore how images towards political parties are constructed and developed. In this context, I would like to argue whether there is any fix procedure and/or way of schooling in the part of the common people in Nepal for being schooled to grow as leaders or cadres of a particular political party. I therefore have developed this paper to deal with the same argument.

The impetus for preparing this paper

This paper portrays the ways political party orients or trains the common people to help them grow as party leaders and cadres in the context of Nepal. While articulating the images towards political party and its schooling, I have brought evidences from my own socio-political life world, ranging from my own

childhood to adulthood. At the same time, I have linked my personal ways of being schooled as a member of a particular political party with the pragmatists' theory of schooling (Christman, 2008) ^[3]. The reason behind bringing pragmatic schooling as a theoretical base of this paper is important in many ways. First, politics in my opinion is a pragmatic enterprise in which change is claimed through action (MacGilvray, 1999) ^[9]. Second, schooling is 'experiencing' (Bakken, 2002) ^[2]. Images towards party schooling can be re/constructed through acting and experiencing in the given socio-political environment (Wales, Magee, & Nicolai, 2016) ^[13].

Methodology

This paper was developed by triangulating the evidences from my political life world and connecting them with the continuum of re/forming, performing and transforming. Basing upon the pragmatists sense of schooling, I incorporate my experiences from my childhood to adulthood to raise question and argument related to the ways party schooling takes place in the context of Nepal. I then portray how the pragmatic stance of schooling aligns with the continuum of re/forming, performing and transforming.

Theoretical underpinning

Pragmatic schooling asserts human life 'as it is' which is quite much different from idealistic schooling that claims how human life should be (Amabile & Khaire, 2008) ^[1]. That might be the reason for idealist to roam in the ideal world where the practicality of an individual life is undermined. Idealism in political affairs in the country focuses on what should be the policy and how a country should be governed (Bakken, 2002) ^[2]. Pragmatism asserts the policy, laws, rules and regulations that work to ensure desirable change in the life of common (Christman, 2008) ^[3]. Pragmatic schooling therefore aims at bringing desirable change in the life of the target participants. But, one may raise a question: how is the desirable change possible? To respond this question, pragmatists focus on conviction, commitment, thought and action in the part of those who work for bringing change and also in the part of those who receive change (Schroeder, 2002). The core theme of the pragmatic schooling is to train the target participants by helping them engage in activities (Bakken, 2002) ^[2]. When I explain party schooling of a particular political party with the lens of pragmatic theory of schooling, it provides me a space to review the purpose of politics and the way the party in question work to meet it. As to my experience, politics is the power to attain collective goal (MacGilvray, 1999) ^[9]. It helps to ensure safety, order and common welfare within the defined estate (Fung, 2007) ^[4]. In a localized sense, politics can be taken as a means of living with others who are substantially different from self (Steger, Frazier, Oishi, & Kaler, 2006). There are possibilities of clashes, disputes and uncomfortable circumstances which deliberately needs negotiation, consensus to cope with. In such circumstances, politics comes into play. Political schooling therefore contributes to manage thought and actions among self and others to help us build up consensus for living and working together (Christman, 2008) ^[3]. Party schooling in this regard goes in line with pragmatic

assertion of orienting self and others by re/constructing our thoughts and reflecting them into our action so that we can manage our individual and collective life amongst our differences.

Linking party schooling with pragmatists' notion of learning provides me space to create the continuum of re/forming, performing and transforming. In each stage of schooling as such, action, reflection and change go together. In the stage of formation, the party develops or builds up certain instructional guidelines through which the party leaders and/or cadres perform their political activities. The political actions, in the long run, bring some changes upon which the leaders and/or cadres reflect. In this way, iterative journey along with action, reflection and change causes transformation in their political career.

Party schooling as Self-forming and Self-sensitizing: My childhood experiences

It was the time during my childhood, I often saw a number of adults hanging a cotton cloth *jhola* (a typical Nepali bag made up of Nepali clothes) down their shoulders. They were often in *Kurtha* and *Pajama* (Indian/Pakistani kind of men wear) and a *Jwari coat* (a half coat worn by the then Prime minister of India Jawaharlal Neharu and became popular thereafter) over the *Kurtha*. Wearing a *Dhaka topi* (a typical Nepali cap for men) on their head, they walked sometimes alone and/or some other time in a group. They however often appeared in the evening time in the street of my village. Most often they would call one another with the word *NetaJee* (a popular Nepali term to address political leaders). I was too young at that time to interpret the word *NetaJee*. I however enjoyed their presence in the village because they often talked about the country, the king and the people in Nepal. The way they talked appeared to me as if they were *thulomanche* (great people). Although they did not belong to my village, their frequent visit to us created an impression that they were probably our neighbors, relatives and villagers. They lived in the villagers' houses and discussed public unity for agitation. While doing so, they were aware of being safe from the arrest of police. For this, they often ordered children of about 10 to 12 years of age to see outside of the house and inform them about a stranger, if any, approached the house.

Imperceptibly, I engaged myself into the work they asked me to. I was not conscious on what I was doing. Yet, I thought that perhaps they might have asked me to do something good. My childhood political schooling of the kind was unplanned, uninformed, eventual and situational. In this kind of party schooling, as I see from the lens of today, I, as a 'would be cadres/leaders', were unaware, un-empowered and un-sensitized about the terms like 'party' and 'politics'. But unknowingly I had already begun the journey of developing myself as a cadre and/or a leader of a particular political party. As the part of childish nature, my curiosity raised immensely to know who they were and why they engaged in the activities as such. I often wanted to know the reason behind their underground activities. I was sure that they were certainly talking about something which is not to be flashed out to the police. What was that thing? Why did they do so? What did they want to achieve, instead? These questions whirled into my

mind multiplying my curiosity to know about them in detail. In response to my curiosity, I often expected myself to go near them and listen to their discussion.

On the way to being schooled about party politics, I did not remain in the 'unknown' state. My own desire for knowing about the people and environment around me pushed me to get information about the same (Khadka, 1993). In this stage of my life, especially with reference to my childhood memory, party schooling appears to me as 'inquiring' (Kymlicka, 2002) ^[2] about the people who engaged into the mysterious activities performed by *Netajee* in the then context of Nepal. Now I also feel party schooling in the then context of Nepal was 'awakening of curiosity' (Christman, 2008) ^[3] to get to the ideas of what the others in my surrounding do and why they do that.

It was an event during my school days. I was a primary school student in 1980. A Friday afternoon the school bell rang. It was there where I accomplished my primary education. The students cheered because it was the signal for us to go home. The school had ended that day. Many students began to go home. At times, I saw two men hanging a *Jhola* upon the shoulder were entering the school gate. I began to play on the school ground expecting that many others would gather in the school to discuss in a group. In a moment, many came there and sat in a classroom. After sometimes, they talked about the number of their friends were arrested by the police in different parts of the country. Sometimes they talked about Chinese and some other times they talked about Indian way to ruling the country. Most often they pronounced the word 'democracy' and that they were not provided with the rights by the government which they are subjected to. They had pamphlets in their *Jhola* to distribute among the common in the village. One of them called me and asked me to take some of the pamphlets and distribute to my friends and the people whom I meet in my neighborhood. While receiving pamphlets in my hand I saw many of them carrying red covered books, bulletins on politics. Perhaps it was the time when I informed myself, especially with reference to the then context of my childhood, what it means to be politicians and how politics can be performed in a group of like-minded people. Perhaps the image of 'a group of like-minded people' (Fung, 2007) ^[4] which I developed in my mind was the basic foundation of the meaning of the term 'party' and the activities performed by those like-minded people was the meaning of 'politics' for me. It was the dawn of my journey towards party politics and making the sense of it. Based on their conversation, I developed an idea that like-minded people (in this context, symbolic meaning of party) of the kind speak about 'democracy', 'ruling of the country', 'Indian and Chinese system of government', so on and so forth. The idea of distributing pamphlets appears to me, in this context, as a metaphor of party's information in which their ideology was embedded to.

The happening as such went on for many years. I slowly got acquainted with the term party, politics. In the long run I also came to know their purpose of meeting together holding discussion and sharing information for reintroducing democracy in Nepal. It was the time of Panchayat democracy in Nepal and they were agitating against the prevailing system of government (Khadka, 1993). The ongoing discourses on

party politics was hidden, underground and entirely local and people specific which spread from one house to another and one person to another increasing awareness and sensitization of the people throughout the village and neighboring villages as well (Gerber & Lewis, 2004).

Although it was not my conscious effort, I sensitized myself about the terms like 'party' and 'politics'. And when I observe the context in which I unknowingly interacted with those political leaders on the matter of 'party' and 'politics', it gives me the sense of schooling in which I grew myself from uninformed being to informed one, especially in relation to party politics. Perhaps it was my way of forming myself as a part of party politics. In today's sense, the way itself appears to be a form of schooling and the information that I equipped with, especially about party politics, through the process appears to be its consequence.

Portraying my experiences from the section of my political life, I would like to reveal how the terms 'formation' and/or 'reformation' come into play in the early political initiatives led by an individual.

Party schooling as performing: My active engagement in political activities

It was the time in 1980 when I accomplished my primary education in my own village in *Terai* (plain area), south east of the country. After that I joined a secondary school in another village, where I could not remain left behind participating in the discourses on party politics. Unknowingly, I began to carry a message of one leader to another and I also began to participate distributing pamphlets and leaflets of the party door to door in the villages. By the time, I was not aware of the party politics and I was not matured enough to decide the meaning of politics and its relationship with the party. I just engaged into it unknowingly thinking that the big men in the village are doing these activities and, therefore, involving into it may be justifiably right for me, too.

In today's lens, my engagement into political activities, especially after joining secondary education, appeared to be the stage of 'performing'. I became more active than before in distributing party pamphlets and leaflets of the party to every house in the village and the neighboring village, too. I also engaged myself in carrying the message of one leader in the village to another in another village. Although I was not much aware about party ideology and was not matured enough to understand and explain why I engaged myself actively in party politics, I entered the dawn of my political performance (Greenwald & Farnham, 2000) ^[6]. In this stage of my life, there was space for me to re/form myself in terms of party ideology, its scope and intents for the people at large. Yet, I began to perform activities led by the then political party, which I interacted with in my family and social setting (Macpherson, 2010) ^[10]. In this context of my life, I realize that my political schooling appeared in the form of 'performing political activities' instructed by the then party leaders (Bakken, 2002) ^[2]. On the way to performing political activities, my work of re/forming myself, in terms of political affairs, went on side by side. I therefore think that 'performing political activities' does not only refer to the cadre's engagement but also their re/formation and sensitization (Wales, Magee, & Nicolai,

2016)^[13]. Although the political schooling as such was not my conscious choice, I committed to be the part of this schooling thinking that it would help me to grow being a big man in my life.

My journey of being schooled about party politics went on continuously. I got through School Leaving Certificate (SLC) examination (now Secondary Education Examination [SEE]) in 1992 AD. and by the time democracy was reintroduced in Nepal. After passing the SLC examination I came to Kathmandu, the capital city of Nepal for further education. I joined in Patan Multiple Campus in 1993 AD in I. Sc. level where I found students were divided into various groups affiliating to various political parties. Time and again they organized meeting and rally in which I was one of the participants. Sometimes I engaged in one group to know what they said and how they set and performed their political agenda in the campus. But some other time I engaged into another group. The selection of my engagements in a particular group of students affiliated to a particular political party was not merely my choice; it depended upon the invitation that I received from the students' leaders belonging to a particular group.

When I observed my engagement in political affairs right after passing the SLC examination, I found it different in nature than that which I did during my secondary school education. Before passing secondary level of education, my political performances were self-led, self-motivated, individualized centering to self-satisfaction (Amabile & Khaire, 2008)^[1]. When I entered college, my political performances appeared to be the part of the group of my fellow beings (Gerber & Lewis, 2004). The group interactions on party politics re/formed and re/shaped the images of party politics, which I had constructed during my school age; and so was my political performances, especially during the time when I was a college student. Such context of my political engagement induced me to think party schooling as performing political activities in groups (Wales, Magee, & Nicolai, 2016)^[13]. I thus entered in the phase of performing politics in a group of fellow being. On the way to engaging into political activities in groups, I learned how to set political agenda and what sort of political campaign in group would be helpful to achieve the goal (Bakken, 2002)^[2]. Gradually, my active engagement in performing political activities in groups appeared to be so prominent that I was invited to participate in the groups of students studying in other campuses in the valley. My performance as a part of party schooling may reflect transformation in itself. But, in this context, the term 'performance' serves me as a means to an end. That is, transformation in my political career is an end while my political performance becomes a means to attain the end.

Party schooling as transforming: My growth as a leader in politically affiliated organizations

On the way to visualizing party schooling with reference to the socio-political setting in which I was a part, I arrived the stage of self-transformation. This stage appeared to me as the result of the process of self-re/forming and self-performing (Steger, Frazier, Oishi, & Kaler, 2006) in relation to party politics from my school to college life. Self-transformation, especially from

a party cadre to a party leader, constitutes the process of self-informing, self-re/forming and self-performing (Greenwald & Farnham, 2000)^[6]. As time rolled on, my growth as a leader in politically affiliated organizations took place as follows:

After passing I.Sc. I joined B.Ed in Kathmandu Siksha (Education) Campus, where I became so popular among the students mass that I was asked to be their leader. Although I was not in the condition to hold the post of leadership of the group of students, I did so in response to the pressure of their request. After a year, I was temporarily appointed in a government school as a primary level teacher where, again, I unknowingly happened to associate myself with a group of teachers' organization. Although it was not my conscious choice and I was not decisively ready to choose a particular group of teacher, I was bound to participate in the activities organized by them because it was the part of the social relationship and the environment in which I professionally belonged to.

After working in the school as a primary level teacher for about five years, I resigned it to join the post of Principal in a higher secondary school. By the time, I had accomplished my Master's Degree and then I joined M.Phil. It took two years for me to accomplish M.Phil while I was continuing my job as a principal in a higher secondary school. At the same time, I hoped to join Higher Secondary Schools' Association Nepal, HISSAN where I, after some years, was elected as the secretary in the central committee of the organization. Side by side, I joined PhD. In my PhD course, I again happened to work closely with students' welfare council (SWC). Although I was not an officially elected leader or member of the council, I participated in many meetings to decide upon the key agenda related to the welfare of the students in the university.

It was the phase of party schooling in my life in which I learned what it means to be a political leader. On the way to growing myself as a leader in politically affiliated organizations, I learned how the hierarchy of leadership work as an internal mechanism (Amabile&Khaire, 2008)^[1] and how the mechanism as such plays the role in making the party/organization run ahead (Mudde, 2007)^[11]. I also learned to make a public agenda political and vice-versa (Wales, Magee, & Nicolai, 2016)^[13] and how to develop a mission framework to deal with agenda as a contemporary political goal (Macpherson, 2010)^[10]. In this phase, I appeared to be a committed leader for the organization in dealing with, controlling and managing the political complexities within the organizations (Khadka, 1993). Transforming myself as a leader in this context appeared to me as synthesizing myself with the party ideology and political context of the organization by adapting and circulating organizational values, norms and guidelines in accordance with the party ideology (Bakken, 2002)^[2]. Just as a caterpillar grows into a butterfly, so I developed myself from an un-empowered and un-informed cadre in my childhood to a matured leader of various organizations in my adulthood.

The term 'schooling' in the political party can function as academic performance which consists the chain of re/forming, performing and transforming. The traditional party schooling may begin with very minute, sub-conscious and often with trifle significance leading to conscious, matured and

meaningful engagement. Such image of party schooling in the context of Nepal contribute to enrich academia with a unique way of re/defining the term 'schooling' and also the way of linking party politics with the field of education.

Conclusion

Party schooling, especially in the socio-political context consists of three different phases: re/forming, performing and transforming. The stage of re/forming in the process of getting to the party politics is followed by the self-performance. In this stage, attempts are made to materialize political awakening into reality. Party-related performances can make the party leaders and cadres realize who they are and who the others are in their surroundings, especially in relation to party politics. It also induces the mid-career level cadres develop themselves as a committed cadres and leaders on the way to performing the party-related activities. Their awakening in the form of self re/forming process through party-related performances and it begins to be matured enough converting them into an insightful and performative cadre of the political party which they un/knowingly belong to. In this stage, the party leaders and cadres turn themselves from un-empowered, uninformed and un-sensitized political being to empowered, informed, committed and sensitized cadres.

The stage of 'performing' on the process of party schooling can pave the way for transforming themselves into an able leader of some politically affiliated organizations. For example, my growth as a leader in the professional organizations was the part of the journey which I accomplished from uninformed political being to semi-informed cadres and thereby well-informed leader. Leadership therefore is the result of party schooling which constitutes of re/forming, performing and transforming activities. In this way, party schooling seems to have emerged as an area of research and branch of knowledge within the field of party politics.

References

1. Amabile TA, Khaire M. Creativity and the role of the leader. Cambridge, MA: Harvard Business School Publishing, 2008.
2. Bakken B. Norms, values and cynical games with party ideology. *The Copenhagen Journal of Asian Studies*. 2002; 16:106-137.
3. Christman J. Autonomy in moral and political philosophy. In *Stanford encyclopedia of philosophy*, 2008. Retrieved from <https://stanford.library.sydney.edu.au/archives/spr2008/entries/autonomy-moral/>
4. Fung A. Democratic theory and political science: A pragmatic method of constructive engagement. *American Political Science Review*. 2007; 101(3):443-458.
5. Gerber ER, Lewis JB. Beyond the median: Voter preferences, district heterogeneity, and political representation. *Journal of Political Economy*. 2004; 112(6):1364-1383.
6. Greenwald AG, Farnham SD. Using the implicit association test to measure self-esteem and self-concept. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*. 2000; 79(6):10-22.
7. Khadka N. Democracy and development in Nepal: Prospects and challenges. *Pacific Affairs*, 1993, 44-71.
8. Kymlicka W. *Contemporary political philosophy: An introduction*. Oxford, England: Oxford University Press, 2002.
9. MacGilvray EA. Experience as experiment: Some consequences of pragmatism for democratic theory. *American Journal of Political Science*, 1999, 542-565.
10. Macpherson CB. *The political theory of possessive individualism: Hobbes to Locke*, 2010. Retrieved from <https://numerov.com/dspace/es/lubel.pdf>
11. Mudde C. *Populist radical right parties in Europe*. Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 2007, 22(8).
12. Schroeder CH. Prophets, priests, and pragmatists. *Minnesota Law Review*. 2002; 87:1065-1089.
13. Wales J, Magee A, Nicolai S. *How does political context shape education reforms and their success? Lessons from the development progress project*. London, England: Overseas Development Institute, 2016.